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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/SPG, S/CRS
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY

SENSITIVE, SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL PGOV KPKO AU CD SU

SUBJECT: DEATH OF UN DARFUR PEACEKEEPER

REFTEL: IIR 6890 038407

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. The death of Lieutenant Colonel Ehab Nazih marks the first death in Darfur of a United Nations peacekeeper. There is no indication that the death was politically motivated, but the incident underscores the increasing banditry and lawlessness on the ground. Sudanese government, UNMIS and AMIS officials have committed to improving security in the area. (Note: Further reporting provided reftel. End note.) END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On Friday May 25 at approximately 11:30 p.m., three young males armed with AK-47s entered a residence of EU and UN officers in El Fasher. LTC Ehab Nazih, a staff officer working for the Joint Logistics Operations Center (JLOC), was shot in the course of the robbery. Colonel Thinus Van Staden, chief of staff for the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), narrowly missed being shot as he exited his room and surprised one of the assailants. He was able to take cover in his room. The assailants took several hundred dollars in cash, a few laptops, cellphones and Thurayas. Van Staden rendered first aid to Nazih, then transported him to the African Union Mission to Sudan (AMIS) hospital near the force headquarters, where he died about an hour later.

¶3. (U) AMIS and UNMIS soldiers held a ceremony to pay tribute to Nazih the following afternoon. Governor of North Darfur Yousef Kibir, African Union Deputy Head of Mission Hassan Gibril and UNMIS Coordinator Henry Anyidoho attended. Nazih's body was then flown to Khartoum, where a similar ceremony was held at the airfield before it was conveyed to his native Egypt. The Defense Attaché paid respects on behalf of Post.

SECURITY OPERATIONS

¶4. (SBU) Approximately sixty Sudanese government police and national security personnel screened the neighborhood the day after the shooting, looking for suspects. In a possibly related operation, government forces surrounded the residence inhabited by armed Sudanese Liberation Army/Minawi (SLA/M) soldiers, and witnesses said they heard them demand to search the premises. The government forces did not enter the building, however, and the standoff ended peaceably an hour later. Comment: SLA/Minawi and GoS representatives to the Ceasefire Commission denied any standoff, claiming that the operation was directed toward another house in the vicinity. End comment.

¶5. (SBU) On May 27, AMIS Deputy Force Commander Ephrem Rurangwa and UNMIS Force Commander Jasbir Lidder expressed their grave concerns over security to Governor Kibir, who promised to increase patrols in the area around AMIS force headquarters. (Note: Lidder also informed Kibir that he would delay further deployment of light support package personnel until the new UNMIS residential compound in El

Fasher was completed. End note.) GoS police, AMIS and UN military police are cooperating in the investigation. One suspect has been apprehended but no further information is available pending the completion of the investigation.

¶6. (SBU) Brigadier General Pierre Roques, Second Vice-Chair of the Ceasefire Commission and the European Union observer, told Poloff separately that unless AMIS conducted more robust patrols, which would require that sixty additional AU soldiers be stationed at the force headquarters, he would have no choice but to reduce the EU's presence in Darfur. There are currently six EU officers operating in the area.

POWERS